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Generation Y students choose careers on interests, not money

A major national study conducted by ACER for The Smith Family has revealed that many Generation Y Australian students are choosing careers based on their interests, not money.

The study of more than 1300 disadvantaged Year 11 and 12 students who are receiving support from The Smith Family's Learning for Life program found that anticipated income does not factor in their plans to attend university. Rather, the type of role and how closely it aligns with their interests and abilities has emerged as the deciding factor for these teens rather than the potential size of their pay packet.

The Smith Family's Learning for Life program supports more than 23 500 disadvantaged children and young people in Australia, improving their life opportunities through better access to education. The students receive financial assistance in the form of a scholarship as well as access to specialised programs such as homework clubs, literacy support and mentoring. The Smith Family conducts research to better understand why a significant proportion of disadvantaged youth fail to make a successful transition from school to work or further study.

The research areas covered included:

Student perception of the world of work in late 2005 and how these had changed since 2004.

Most of the young people in the study had educational plans which would allow them entry to their preferred job, but there was some confusion about educational requirements, with around 25 per cent of young people planning a level of education too low for their preferred job.

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The research showed that educational plans change. It should not be assumed that sound plans made in one year will stay the same or, if they change, remain sound. *The extent to which students' post-school plans in 2005 imply upward social mobility.*

These young people from low socio-economic backgrounds were planning a future shaped by their interests, perceived ability, and their families. While the families were found to be supportive, there was little evidence of overly ambitious parents pushing their children in inappropriate directions. The relationship between the expectations of family members and the student's plans for further study emerged as an important influence on the decision to attend TAFE or university. The role of family expectations in shaping post-school plans may need further investigation. For most students, realisation of their plans would involve upward social mobility.

Factors which shape Learning for Life students' plans for attending university.

Two thirds (67 per cent) of the students surveyed planned to undertake a Bachelor Degree or Diploma. Around 60 per cent of Learning for Life students agreed that it was worth it to attend university. The strongest factors influencing this view were the socioeconomic status of their preferred job and their perceived ability. Vocational interests were also important. The monetary returns of having a university degree did not appear to be a factor when deciding whether university study was worth it for them, even when they had a reasonably accurate understanding of these monetary returns. Only a small proportion of students demonstrated an accurate understanding of how further study will impact their salary, indicating their assessment of 'worth' is based on values other than financial gain.

On track? Students choosing a career is the fourth in a series of reports conducted by ACER for The Smith Family that investigates the study and career plans of disadvantaged youth. A complete copy of the report *On track? Students choosing a career* is available from www.smithfamily.com.au.

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ACER UPDATE

Professional development in Pakistan

The ACER International Institute has been contracted by the British Council in Pakistan to provide a range of training programs to staff of the Institute of Educational Research at the University of the Punjab in Lahore, the Federal College of Education in Islamabad, the National Education Assessment System (NEAS) in Islamabad and the Provincial Education Assessment Centres (PEACE). Staff from ACER will provide 10 weeks of training in Pakistan and 10 weeks of training in Australia between June 2006 and Nov 2007. The provision of the training began in Lahore on June 19th with ACER Research Fellow, Hamish Coates, providing a two week course on Research Methods. This will be followed by a two week program on Test Construction delivered by Senior Research Fellow, Assessment and Reporting, Margaret Wu in Lahore from July 3 - July 15.

The extensive training being provided by ACER and ETS is designed to build the capacity of those involved in the national assessment of students in four content areas (social studies, urdu, maths, science) and across three year levels (years 3, 5 and 7) which was introduced in 2005.

The initial day of training for the ACER Certificate program in Lahore on June 19th was also attended by the Head of the World Bank in Pakistan and the State Minister of Education Ms Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli and a strong contingent from local print and television media.

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ACER and CERT sign memorandum of understanding

ACER has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre of Excellence for Applied Research and Training (CERT) to collaborate on the design and delivery of professional development programs and teacher training in the United Arab Emirates.

CERT is the commercial arm of the Higher Colleges of Technology in the and is in the business of developing and providing education, training and applied technology for public and private sector clients. It is also involved in strategic alliances with a number of large multinational organisations in developing a diverse range of business and technology solutions. The MoU was recently signed at a ceremony in Abu Dhabi.

Re-imagining Educational Leadership

Re-imagining Educational Leadership by Professor Brian Caldwell was launched at ACER on 29 June by Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education at The University of Melbourne. Professor Caldwell, currently the Deputy Chair of ACER, is an internationally recognised leader in education and has held a number of significant roles including the Dean of Education of the University of Melbourne.

Guest speakers at the launch included Cheryl O'Connor, CEO of the Australian College of Educators, who launched the ACE on the Road seminar program, and Dr Wendy Cahill, Head of iNet Australia, who launched a new scholarship for young leaders in education, which is to be funded by royalties from sales of the book.

Re-imagining Educational Leadership is published by ACER Press. To purchase a copy please contact Customer Service on (03) 9277 5447 or visit the [ACER Press website.](#)

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Research Developments issue 15 now available

The latest edition of ACER's newsletter, *Research Developments*, issue 15, Winter 2006 is now available both online and in print format. This issue features articles on the findings of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, an international study of Year 8 science lessons, an analysis of the alternative pathways taken by students who miss out on a university place and a review of research into using data to support student learning in schools. To read the newsletter online or request a print copy, visit the [Research Developments website](#).

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Australian Council for Educational Research
Private Bag 55, Camberwell, Victoria Australia 3124
Tel: + 61 3 9277 5555
Fax: + 61 3 9277 5500
Web: www.acer.edu.au

